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Fruits and Vegetables: A Niche Market for Small Farmers

Growing fruits and vegetables — especially specialty items preferred by ethnic populations, unusual minor crops grown on a limited scale, or certified organic produce — offers profitable niche markets for small farmers.

Many unique crops do not easily adapt to large-scale production — so corporate farm enterprises, which control much of the world's food business, do not produce them. Small growers can capitalize on growing this specialty produce not commonly available in supermarkets.

For a growing number of consumers, price is not a limitation. Today's customers want high-quality, interesting, attractive, tasty, nutritious, and convenient foods. Many want to know who grows their food and under what cultivation practices.

Increasingly, successful small fruit and vegetable growers need to know as much about business and marketing as horticulture. Dwight James, who grows traditional, heirloom, and hybrid pumpkins on his Alabama farm, attributes his successful operation to "10 percent growing and 90 percent marketing."

To maximize profit, small growers need to sell a diversity of farm-raised products directly to consumers through various marketing methods. Small farmers are better suited to do relationship marketing than are larger firms, whose sheer size requires selling food in an impersonal marketing system.

Acreage need not be large for success. In his book *Making Your Small Farm Profitable*, farmer and writer Ron Macher cites as an example the "Biggest Little Farm in America," a California farm that grosses more than \$200,000 annually from only a half-acre of gourmet vegetables.

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Farmer entrepreneur John Whitmore keeps his popular roadside stand — Farmer John's, outside Leesburg, Virginia — open from 8 to 8 daily in season..—PHOTO BY LOU NICHOLS

Your Small Farm Neighbors

John J. Whitmore Leesburg, Virginia

Prosper Well Farm, located outside historic Leesburg, VA, has been in John J. Whitmore's family since 1843. He is an expert farmer and masterful fruit and vegetable marketer.

"I used to raise 1,200 head of hogs — a farrow-to-finish operation — but the market 'went South' and area meat company processing plants phased out," says Whitmore. "Today vegetables and fruits are the main earners in my diversified farm operation."

At Farmer John's Roadside Stand, corn, tomatoes, and peaches are what local customers want most. Eggplant, squash, cucumbers, watermelon, honeydew melon, apples, pumpkins, jellies, and potted mums are also sold and shipped to special customers as far away as Alaska. Day-old produce is donated to a local food bank.

The popular roadside stand, offering

fresh, tasty, quality produce, sits in front of Whitmore's historic farm home off busy two-lane James Monroe Highway. The highway runs past other farms, a local vineyard, and expensive housing developments in horse country, connecting the cities of Leesburg, VA, and Frederick, MD.

Customers typically stop at lunchtime and on their way home from work in the evening to buy produce summer through fall. Fresh-cut cornstalks are sold during fall.

The roadside stand is situated among tall trees for shade and a natural environment. Produce is displayed on hay bales, authentic old wooden wagons, and wooden boxes. Straw, placed on the ground, is dampened to keep dust down. The business offers convenience by being open 8 to 8 daily. Potted mums, while not a major income source, accentuate pumpkins, apples, and other produce.

Asked what makes his roadside stand so successful, Whitmore says,

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As agriculture increasingly moves to a global market, what fruit and vegetable crops can you specialize in and market better than anyone in the world? What regional or environmental quality or cultivation practices can you capitalize on to promote your produce?

CONSIDERATIONS

Crop Decisions. Choose a crop mix compatible with your climate, farm resources, and soil type that you can market for a profit. Will you raise single-season vegetables? What cover crops will you use to prevent erosion and discourage weeds? Will you alternate fast and slower growing crops? Will you grow one or several varieties of specialty crops to market seasonally as fresh produce?

Depending on your region, will you do a late summer/fall crop garden to extend sales? Your state small farm program coordinator or local county extension agent can give you advice about crops that work well in your region and other technical information. Your state contact is listed at <http://www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm>.

For sales with a longer marketing life, you may be able to turn your fruits or vegetables into value-added products like dried fruits, jams, braided garlic, or a bottled barbecue sauce. [See the Fall 1999 *Small Farm Digest* issue on value-added food products.]

Soil Type. Of the more than 18,000 different types of American soils, do you know the type(s) on your land? For soil information, contact your local extension agent.

Techniques. Consider crop rotation to increase crop quality and yields or drip irrigation to conserve water. Season extenders like high tunnels or hoop houses — low-cost alternatives to greenhouses — provide frost protection, allowing growers earlier spring planting and later fall harvesting to sell produce longer. Black plastic mulch and floating row covers are finding increasing use.

Regulations. Learn about current registration, licensing, and zoning requirements from federal, state, county, and city agencies for your type of operation. If you sell prepared foods and allow customers to sample them, check county

health department regulations.

See if marketing orders and marketing agreements, which regulate product flow to market, standardize containers, and establish commodity reserve pools, are in effect for the fruit and vegetables you grow. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) oversees these legal instruments, authorized by Congress.

Consult the AMS website (<http://www.ams.usda.gov>), phone book blue pages, or Ronald Cioffi, Chief, Marketing Order Administration Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, USDA/AMS (phone 202/720-2491; fax 202/720-5698; e-mail Ronald.Cioffi@usda.gov).

Federal law requires any business that buys or sells wholesale quantities of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables to have a Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) license. Enacted at the produce industry's request to promote fair trade, PACA protects businesses dealing in highly perishable produce. This includes shippers, wholesalers, brokers, retailers, processors, and many e-commerce firms. [See Select Information Hotlines on page 4.]

Risk Management. The USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) currently provides crop insurance protection on 100 crops, including more than 40 fruit and vegetable crops nationwide.

Fruit crops covered are almonds, apples, apricots, blackberries, blueberries, cherries, citrus, cranberries, figs, grapes, grapefruit, peaches, nectarines, lemons, mint, macadamia nuts, pears, pecans, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, and walnuts.

Vegetable crops covered are cabbage, chile peppers, peppers, cultivated wild rice, dry beans, dry peas, fresh market beans, fresh market sweet corn, fresh market tomatoes, green peas, mustard, onions, and winter squash.

Processing crops covered are processing apricots, processing beans, processing cling peaches, processing cucumbers, processing freestone peaches, and processing tomatoes.

Fruit trees covered are citrus, grapefruit, avocado, carambola, macadamia, mango, and orange.

RMA also provides whole farm coverage with its Adjusted Gross Revenue

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Product, a non-traditional pilot program available in 17 states, offering protection to agricultural producers against low revenue due to unavoidable natural disasters and market fluctuations occurring during the insurance year. Coverage is based on the insured Schedule F farm tax forms for 5 consecutive years. See RMA regional offices listed at <http://wwwrma.usdagov/aboutrma/fields/rsos.html> and <http://wwwrma.usda.gov/tools/agents/> for a list of agents by state, or contact Sharon Hestvik, RMA Small Farms Coordinator (phone 202/720-6685 or e-mail Sharon_Hestvik@wdc.usda.gov).

If workers and/or customers are coming onto your farm for a roadside stand, u-pick, agri-tourism, or community-supported agriculture, or if you prepare value-added foods in an on-farm licensed kitchen, ask your insurance agent about liability and insurance coverage needed.

Home owner's insurance may not cover a farm business, so investigate standard business insurance for liability. A commercial kitchen requires separate insurance.

Food Processing. Check local, state and federal health regulations, permits, licensed kitchens, and other rules. [See the Fall 1999 issue of *Small Farm Digest* on value-added food products for food processing considerations.]

Food Safety. The President's 1997 Food Safety Initiative identified microbial food safety hazards for produce as a major issue. Contact your state department of agriculture and local health department to find out about current guidelines for reducing microbial hazards.

See Select Websites section (pg. 4) for access to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Summary of the "Guide To Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables." The Guide recommends on-farm food safety practices to help prevent microbial contamination of fresh produce.

Resources. Along with websites pertaining to fruits and vegetables at land-grant universities, check your industry or local fruit and vegetable associations for workshops, conferences, technical assistance, and other information.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Identify your customer base and target your market early in the season.
- Know your customers, including ethnic groups wanting specialty produce and marketing methods that fit their culture.
- Visit nearby grocery stores and study what fruits and vegetables are carried, product display techniques, and people traffic flows. Do stores buy produce locally or import? Consider producing fruits and vegetables not carried there.
- Know customers' buying habits and regional growing seasons' windows of opportunity.
- Every region has its own mix of crops that can be successful — find your niche.
- Market your region's and farm's identity in a unique way through a logo and quality products.
- Choose marketing plans that are adaptable to your family, operation, lifestyle, and personality.
- Diversify crops and have complementary marketing outlets to keep income flow steady.
- Think years ahead to plan your

SOME WAYS TO DIRECT-MARKET FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The Internet. Today's businesses need to have an Internet presence. Website advertising opens your business up to a global customer base. [See the *Small Farm Digest* Winter 1999 issue on Internet marketing.]

Farmer Cooperatives. Small growers can spread risks by forming a cooperative to gain market power through joint supply purchasing, bargaining, processing, and marketing. [See the *Small Farm Digest* Winter 2000 issue on cooperatives.]

Farmers Markets. Advice about farmers market charters, insurance, and other considerations is available from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. Farmers markets, usually no more than an hour's drive from large populations, draw many customers to one selling location. [See <http://wwwams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets>.]

operation's growth.

- Successful growers know how much cost they have in their operation and where they are losing money. Focus labor and expenditures on high-value earning crops.
- Farms should look tidy and produce be clean to project a quality message.
- Be dependable with produce availability and hours of operation.
- Market fruits and vegetables by telling what sets your produce apart — such as your growing practices and health advantages like phytonutrients, vitamins, or antioxidant content.
- Consider turning your fruits and vegetables into a value-added retail consumer item like jams, salsas, garlic braids, dried fruits, or herbs.
- Take time to talk with customers. People appreciate friendly contacts.
- If you don't like dealing directly with the public, assign that job to another family member or hire someone with strong people skills.
- Cultivate community presence by forming a connection to your local community.
- Stand behind your product with product replacement or a money back guarantee.

Roadside Stands. Location on a high-traffic road is essential. Clear directional signs, adequate parking, and attractive displays of fresh, clean, and quality produce draw repeat customers. Stand set-ups can be simple or elaborate. Understand your customer base to know what produce they seek and what times your stand should be staffed.

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA). At the beginning of the growing season, a CSA farmer forms a direct relationship with a customer base before planting. CSA members invest in a harvest share by giving the farmer money up front for the farm operation. Members receive weekly in-season produce deliveries. Customers sign a CSA agreement stating that they assume risks and bounty of farming.

Subscription Farming. Customers do not pay for a year's harvest share at one

time but weekly, monthly, or quarterly. They do not share bad harvest risk. Customers expect a weekly share, which must be made up if the crop fails.

U-Pick Farms. Customers come on farms to pick fruits and vegetables, eliminating the farmer's harvest and delivery costs to buyers. Some pre-picked produce may be offered. Local advertising, clear road signs, parking, a clean bathroom with baby-changing facilities, shady rest area, refreshments, picking containers, weigh site with cash register, and friendly sales personnel are key.

Let customers know on recorded phone messages what produce is available or unavailable and when your operation is closed for any reason. [See the Spring/Summer 1999 issue of *Small Farm Digest* on direct marketing with a u-pick.]

Food Circles. A food circle is an informal network of small farmers who sell food to a targeted group like neighbors, who buy from the farmers directly. Farmers pay a small membership fee to be listed in a directory describing their farm-raised products. A coordinator handles customer inquiries and event publicity like festivals. Food circles offer farmers a steady customer base. Customers know who grows their food and by what agricultural practices. Farmer-to-customer rela-

tionships help each other better understand rural-suburban-urban cultures.

Agri-Tourism. Agri-tourism includes entertaining attractions or educational on-farm events to draw customers. When customers have fun by visiting a farm offering petting zoos, school and tourist tours, hay bale or corn mazes, farm specialty gift shops, on-farm restaurants, bed and breakfast accommodations, nature photography, or sports events, they stay longer and spend more money on produce and value-added products. Festivals and other attractions can benefit whole rural communities.

Understand responsibilities and safety issues regarding petting zoos. If you set animals apart from the regular farm operation as a petting zoo attraction, with or without compensation from visitors, you need a USDA Exhibitor's License. Include a sign that says "Animals Can Carry Disease" and a hand-washing station.

See USDA/APHIS website for more information at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac> or call USDA/APHIS Animal Care's Eastern Region at 919-716-5532, Central Region at 817-885-6923, or Western Region at 916-857-6205.

Other Marketing Outlets. Investigate local eatery establishments to target local delis and finer restaurants willing to invest

in superior quality produce. Offer crop varieties unavailable through regular produce company suppliers.

You may sell a portion of your crop through a contract to small cooperative stores specializing in quality organic produce, food chains that buy direct from farmers or farmer cooperatives, schools, nursing homes, the military, prisons, hospitals, caterers, produce company suppliers, airlines, or amusement park food concessions.

Gleaning. Did you know that 20 percent of food grown and prepared in America goes uneaten and that 30 million Americans go hungry monthly?

Farmers' contributions of fresh fruits and vegetables to food banks are important sources of vitamins and minerals, which are often missing from American diets — especially low-income diets. Gleaning includes crops from fields and leftover food from restaurants, stores, farmers markets, cafeterias, and food manufacturers. The Good Samaritan Food Donation Act law protects food donors from lawsuits. Call 1-800-GLEAN-IT to learn about food recovery and receive free "The Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery." ■

SELECT WEBSITES:

<http://www.foodsafety.gov/>

Gateway to Government Food Safety Information — from federal, state, and local government agencies. See "Guide To Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables" at <http://www.foodsafety.gov/~dms/prodguid.html>.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/>

A wealth of information from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, including National Organic Program, AMS Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Marketing Orders, Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) Program Services, Farmers Markets, Farmer Direct Marketing, Market News and Publications. Under Publications, see "Fruit and Vegetable Market News Users Guide."

<http://agebb.missouri.edu/mac/links/>

A multitude of extension guides on agritourism, agribusiness, small fruit, vegetables, marketing direct to consumers and a host of other topics from the Missouri Alternatives Center.

<http://agalternatives.cas.psu.edu/>

Pennsylvania State University's site on agricultural alternatives / small fruits and vegetables.

<http://www.aboutproduce.com/>

See "Produce A-Z" — useful, unusual and fun produce information from the Produce Marketing Association.

<http://www.fb.org/links/>

A wealth of information and ag links from the American Farm Bureau Federation. See especially commodity market information.

Under consumer information, click on "Vegetable Nutrition Facts" and "Fruit Nutrition Facts."

<http://www.cornfieldmaze.com> <http://www.maizemaze.com>

Two sites about creating corn maze environmental art on farms and other sites for agri-tourism.

SELECT INFORMATION HOTLINES:

FDA's Outreach and Information Center: phone 1-888-SAFEFOOD.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service — PACA License Info: phone 1-800-495-PACA.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service — Farmers Market Hotline: phone 1-800-384-8704.

Innovative Produce Marketers Set the Example

Pennsylvania. In 1975, Bev and Sam Minor bought an 80-acre farm 25 miles south of Pittsburgh, PA. Their plan was to sell dairy products and vegetables. The land includes a historic house and barn. The farm is located on a high traffic road with 2,900 cars passing by per day in 1975 and now 6,300 per day.

The Minors obtained financing to build a small dairy product processing plant and a store where they sold ice cream, milk shakes, cheese, breads, and soups. Early on, milk products accounted for 40 percent of their retail sales. They put on special family-oriented food events and marketed sweet corn and pumpkins by the road to test the market. By 1985, they expanded into the SpringHouse Dairy, Vegetable Farm, and Farm Market Restaurant — first offering lunch, then later adding a country buffet supper.

"We included the kinds of cooking a farm wife would prepare for her family using farm-raised ingredients," says Minor. Today, three of the five Minor children help run the successful family farm business, which includes the restaurant, a catering business, school tours, festivals, and events — and they are still milking cows, too.

Idaho. Diane Green operates a small certified organic farm, Greentree Naturals, in Idaho. "There is no reason to grow what always sells for a low price," says this expert in marketing produce to restaurants. She experiments with specialty varieties.

"Being an educator is an important part of marketing produce," she says. "Invite chefs and other buyers to your production area. Explain what is involved in producing, harvesting, and pricing your quality produce. Farm-fresh produce tastes better and has a longer shelf life."

Green also sells at a local farmers market, manages a small produce subscription service, and runs a fresh flower



Miss Santo "Lucy" Mike (center, with bonnet on) gives a group of second-graders from Mandeville, LA, a tour of her strawberry fields. —PHOTO BY SHERRI BROWN

business. Green cultivates a community presence by teaching local elementary school students how to grow pumpkin seeds in their classroom. Students keep a seed growth journal, come to her farm to transplant and mark their seedling spot, and harvest their fully grown pumpkins in the fall.

Illinois. Reverend Al Sampson empowers African-American farmers and communities through the Agricultural Improvement Project, coordinated through Fernwood United Methodist Church in Chicago, IL.

He organized the National Black Farmers Harvest Cooperative and an economic network that connects fresh and nutritious "soul food vegetables" and fruits grown by Southern black farmers to urban and suburban black consumers in Eastern and Midwestern communities.

Sampson helped found the National Black Farmers Harvest and Business Trade Corporation, a partnership of black businesspersons and community and church leaders whose purpose is to save black farmers' land, which is being lost three times faster than other farms.

Farmers' produce is sold at reasonable prices through farmers markets

sponsored by churches, block clubs, local school councils, and other non-profit organizations. The current program benefits black farmers in 10 Southern states. Contact: Reverend Al Sampson, Fernwood United Methodist Church, 10056 S. Parnell Ave., Chicago, IL 60628 (phone 773-445-7125; fax 773-445-7127).

New Mexico. A revival of open-air farmers markets in New Mexico is providing direct marketing outlets for produce grown by local small farmers from seeds inherited by their Indian and Spanish ancestors. The market outlet helps sustain farmers who want to keep alive their centuries-old tradition of cultivating pumpkins, peaches, plums, grapes, chiles, melons, corn, squash, asparagus, radishes, lavender, honey, and eggplant. Gourmet chefs from high-end restaurants in tourist centers of Taos and Santa Fe scout these markets for fresh, unusual ingredients for gourmet fare.

The Pueblo of Santa Ana, a Native American tribe in New Mexico, has farmed continuously since the early 1500's. The tribe is pursuing many strategies to develop tribal enterprises, including marketing a variety of blue

corn and other products via the Internet. Products offered include Tamaya Blue corn, salsa, chile, hot sauce, soups, stews, fry bread, wild rice, syrup, spreads, tea, coffee, and smoked salmon. Check out the website (<http://www.cookingpost.com>).

New Hampshire. Growers like Andy and Martina Howe, from Beans and Greens Farm Stand in Gilford, NH, a vibrant vegetable and flower business featuring a pick-your-own strawberry business in June, benefit from twilight meetings organized by University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. These meetings, held on growers' farms, operate like mini-extension workshops highlighting growers' unique cultivation and marketing practices.

"New Hampshire growers are so willing to share information and help each other," says David Kopsell, a University of New Hampshire extension vegetable specialist. "And evening is a good time for farmers to get away to learn from other successful producers across the state."

Louisiana. Miss Santo "Lucy" Mike, a strawberry and vegetable grower from Louisiana, is known in her state as "The Strawberry Ambassador." For more than 40 years she has enthusiastically promoted strawberries on television and at festivals. She sells her berries locally through a commercial buyer and ships

worldwide to special customers, including American and foreign dignitaries and high-end restaurants.

"I love this work," exclaims Miss Lucy. "Strawberries are in my blood." At 81 years of age, she still rises at dawn and does all the work on her farm except tractor work. The secret of her success is an excellent product and love of people.

California. University of California-Fresno small farm advisors Richard Molinar and Michael Yang, a Laos native and Hmong speaker, bring technical assistance to immigrant small-scale farmers in Fresno County, among them the largest group in the U.S. of Hmong, a Laotian ethnic group, who relocated to Fresno, CA.

Hmong farmers grow familiar Asian vegetables like eggplant and lemongrass. Molinar and Yang encourage these farmers to try other high-cash, high-value crops not native to their former country, like strawberries, and to adapt to new growing techniques.

Yang and Molinar found broadcasting on a Hmong-language radio station to be an effective way to disseminate extension information to Hmong growers. Some small farmers like Hong Yang have applied the technical advice to new crop ventures and are now earning a comfortable livelihood.

YOUR SMALL FARM NEIGHBORS...CONTINUED FROM PG. 1

"People love the natural setting on the farm. We plant our fields by the highway so that customers can see that the produce sold at the stand grows in the adjacent field.

"We are very customer responsive," says Whitmore, "and consider any fruit or vegetable our customers want us to produce. Several customers asked for okra, so we planted a small area and make it available on a u-pick basis."

Whitmore has a large Asian clientele, bringing him unique seeds in the cucumber or eggplant line.

"White eggplant our Asian customers requested has been a huge success. We are the first in the area to offer this vegetable, which has a unique flavor and texture. We also planted Little Fingers, an Asian eggplant variety," says Whitmore.

One Asian customer remarked, "I can't believe you have the same eggplant that we have in our home country!"

Always diversifying, Whitmore produces 120 acres of wheat and field corn and 500 acres of hay for his Black Angus, raised for the kosher market.

Florida. Charlie Andrews, a certified organic small farmer in Florida for 14 years, sells vegetables, including squash and 20 different varieties of tomatoes, to 12 high-end restaurants.

"When targeting to the restaurant trade," says Andrews, "chefs care about unique flavor. My heirloom tomatoes lend themselves to that niche."

He encourages young chefs coming into the business who have never been on a farm to visit his. "Chefs treat the product with a lot more respect when they see all the work and energy put into growing produce," says Andrews. Andrews also sells produce locally to a chain of three organic produce stores and through two trusted brokers in New York and Florida.

Ohio. Eric Barrett, an extension agent in Washington County, OH, comes from a farm family. His brother operates a grazing dairy farm. His father grew pumpkins and sold them from a pile by the road. His family recently switched gears and added 5 acres of pumpkins, gourds, and squash. They offer hayrides to view calves; a small shop called Sweetapple Farm Market with crafts, mums, and Indian corn; and a corn maze on the farm. Barrett reports the family farm had a very successful year. ■

He produces horse bedding for area horse owners, and mulch, orchard grass, and seed for the new home market.

Whitmore tries promising new growing techniques like planting all vegetables in black plastic mulch in a raised bed for best soil drainage and uses drip irrigation. He recently invested in new planting equipment and a plastic mulch lifter machine.

As customers exit his roadside stand, they drive through a field past 50 grazing cows — a parting image of the farm experience. ■

A wide range of resources is available to assist small farmers and ranchers and their communities. Readers wishing further information about the resources listed below are asked to contact the individuals or offices listed for each item.



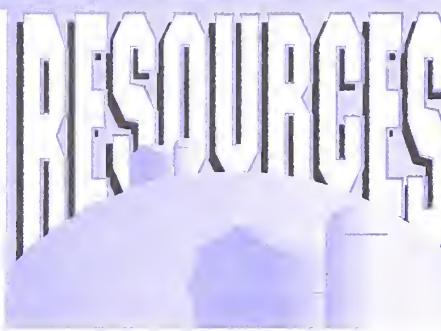
PRINT MEDIA

A Guide to Successful Direct Marketing and A Guide to Fresh Produce Marketing.

Two guides by Dr. Charles Hall, extension specialist at Texas A&M University, applicable to any region of the country. The direct marketing publication discusses successful techniques and strategies for marketing through roadside stands, u-picks, and farmers markets. The produce marketing publication focuses on the wholesale (non-direct) marketing system and key success factors to a sustainable competitive advantage in the produce industry. Cost: \$12 each. To order, contact Dr. Charles R. Hall, Texas A&M University, Department of Agricultural Economics, 2124 TAMU, 464 Blocker Bldg., College Station, TX 77843-2124 (phone 979-845-1772; fax 979-847-9378; e-mail: chall@tamu.edu).

Building Soils for Better Crops. This book by Fred Magdoff and Harold van Es explains how soil management boosts fertility to produce healthy and high-yielding crops. Cost: \$19.95 plus \$3.95 shipping. Make check payable to Sustainable Agriculture Publications. To order, contact Sustainable Agriculture Publications, 210 Hills Building, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405-0082. To order by credit card, call 802-656-0484.

Direct Marketing of Farm Produce. Bulletin



and video by Vern Grubinger, University of Vermont Extension, on a variety of marketing topics of interest to farmers. Cost: \$15. To order, send e-mail to susagctr@zoo.uvm.edu or call the Center for Sustainable Agriculture, 590 Main St., Burlington, VT 05405-0059, or call 802-656-5459.

Growing for Market. Monthly newsletter offering news and ideas for market growers. Cost: \$30 annually. To order, call 800-307-8949; website <http://www.growingformarket.com>; or write: Growing for Market, PO Box 3747, Lawrence, KS 66046.

Northland Berry News. A quarterly publication dedicated to improving and promoting "berrypreneurship" for professional growers of major North American berries and emerging alternative berries. Cost: \$20 annually. To order, contact: Northland Berry News, 595 Grand Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55102-2611; phone 651-265-3413; e-mail pmo@BerryNews.com.

Reap New Profits: Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers. A bulletin from the USDA/CSREES Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program offering alternatives to marketing commodities through conventional channels, value adding, evaluating new enterprises, business plans, conducting market research, legal considerations and resources. Cost: free. To order, write: Sus-

tainable Agriculture Publications, 210 Hills Building, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405-0082. Available on the Internet at <http://www.sare.org/htdocs/pubs/>. Free PowerPoint presentation available at <http://www.sare.org/market99/slideshow> or free CD-ROM version. Contact san@nal.usda.gov or call 301-504-6422 to order.

Sell What You Sow! The Growers Guide to Successful Product Marketing by Eric Gibson. This book offers farmers and market growers practical guidance for high-value marketing of fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Topics include marketing plans and strategies, crop selection, processed products, regulations, insurance, promotion, and advertising. Cost: \$26.50. Send to: New World Publishing, 11543 Quartz Dr., #1, Auburn, CA 95602, or call 530-823-3886.

Specialty and Minor Crops Handbook.

Cultural, post-harvest, and niche marketing information on 63 vegetables, fruits, and herbs uniquely suited to small-scale production. Special section on Asian vegetables, growing in popularity and marketability in the U.S. Cost: \$35 plus \$6 shipping, payable to UC Regents. To order, contact University of California, Div. of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Communication Services-Publications, 6701 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, CA 94608-1289, or order by telephone at 1-800-994-8849 or 510-642-2431 or fax to 510-643-5470, or online at <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu>. Ask for publication #3346.

Healthy Farmers/Healthy Profits Work Efficiency Tip Sheet Set (A3704).

A series of tip sheets on labor efficiency for fresh-market vegetable growers. Cost: \$250. To order, contact Cooperative Extension Publications, 45 North Charter St., Rm. B18, Madison, WI 53715, or call 877-WIS-PUBS or 608-262-3346.

READER FEEDBACK REQUEST - RENEWAL AND SURVEY FORM

Dear *Small Farm Digest* Reader,

Small Farm Digest has been produced for three years. This Winter 2001 issue is the tenth newsletter. Receiving your feedback would be very important to us, so we ask that you return the enclosed *Renewal and Survey Form*.

The information you provide will be used with confidentiality to update the subscriber base of the *Digest*, save dollars by moving the *Digest* toward electronic dissemination, and describe

the *Digest's* reach and uses in order to justify continued production of this newsletter.

You must answer the Form's Question No. 3 and Question No. 4 in order to continue receiving the Digest.

Responding "yes" to Question No. 3, responding to Question No. 4, and returning the form with your postage stamp tells us you value the *Small Farm Digest* and want to continue receiving it. We would greatly appreciate receiving your responses to all the questions on the form.

You also must affix your name and address label to the renewal and survey form as you return it to us. *Peel off the address label from the back page of this Digest issue and place it on the blank space of the survey form (where indicated).* Our return address is already printed on the reverse side of the form for easy reply. Thank you.

— *Stephanie Olson, Editor*

----- (fold here) -----

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Small Farm Digest Office
Ag Box 2220
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250-2220



Renewal and Survey Form for Small Farm Digest Readers

USDA needs to know if you wish to continue receiving *Small Farm Digest* and, if so, how you want to receive it. If you want to continue receiving the Digest, you must return this form with a "yes" reply to Question No. 3 and a response to Question No. 4. We would greatly appreciate receiving your responses to *all* the questions below.

IMPORTANT! With a black pen, please fill in the circle in front of your responses, like this: ●

1. As a recipient of *Small Farm Digest*, into which category or categories below would you place yourself? Please indicate as many responses as apply:

- farm or ranch family
- county government
- state government
- tribal government
- federal government
- state or local cooperative extension staff of a:
 - ▶ 1862 land-grant college 1890 land-grant college 1994 land-grant college

2. How have you used information from *Small Farm Digest*? Indicate all that apply:

- in operating a farm or ranch
- pass to others who farm or ranch
- in directly advising farmers/ranchers
- in designing programs for producers
- in deciding on funding of programs for producers
- other use or uses of *Digest* information
- no use for *Digest* information as yet

3. Do you wish to continue receiving *Small Farm Digest*? Yes No

4. If you wish to continue receiving the *Digest*, how do you prefer to receive it? Select one:

- view it on a web site (notify me at this e-mail address) _____
- by e-mail (send it to me at this e-mail address) _____
- by U.S. mail via the address below (make any necessary corrections on the label):

Please peel off your mailing label by bending up the right edge and lifting it off. Stick it down on top of this box.

Fold this page in half and tape shut; don't staple. Affix a postage stamp, and drop this in the mail no later than May 1, 2001.

Thank you! Your responses will be used with confidentiality only to update the subscriber list for the *Digest*, save dollars by moving it toward electronic dissemination, and describe its reach and uses to justify its continued production. We will not share your e-mail address with others. Direct questions to: Editor, *Small Farm Digest*, Ag Box 2220, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250-2220 (phone 202-401-6544; fax 202-401-5179; e-mail solson@reeusda.gov).

UPCOMING

EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
May 17-19	<i>All Things Organic: Organic Trade Association, Conference and Trade Show</i>	Austin, TX	Eurich Management Systems 517-327-9207
June 2-4	<i>Produce Marketing Association Retail Produce Solutions Conference</i>	Monterey, CA	PMA's Solutions Center - 302-738-7100 or http://www.pma.com
June 13-14	<i>North Carolina A&T University Dean's School of Ag, Environmental, and Allied Sciences Small Farms and Communities Tour</i>	Greensboro, NC & other county sites	Dan Lyons — 336-334-7734
June 27-30	<i>2001 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference</i>	Chicago, IL	Kevin Daugherty — 309-557-3334 http://www.agintheclassroom.org
July 22	<i>2001 Produce Marketing Association Foodservice Produce Exposition</i>	Monterey, CA	PMA's Solutions Center - 302-738-7100 or http://www.pma.com

See Small Farm website (www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm) for the most up-to-date listing of events. We welcome submissions of events from our subscribers that would be of interest to the small farm community so that our Upcoming Events listing reflects a diversity of events from all regions of the country. Please send

submissions to Stephanie Olson, Editor, *Small Farm Digest*, CSREES, USDA, Mail Stop 2220, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250-2220 (phone: 202/401-6544; fax: 202/401-5179; e-mail: solson@reeusda.gov).

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